



## CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD

**SELECT COMMITTEES MEETING #656**

**Friday, April 11, 2003, 10AM.**

**Department of Veterans Affairs Headquarters  
Sacramento, California**



### OPENING COMMENTS/ INTRODUCTIONS:

The California Veterans Board (CVB) formal hearing was called to order at 10:00 a.m. California Veterans Board members present included Chairman George Sinopoli (Fresno), Vice Chair Edward Feldman (Westlake Village), Members Jerry Basconcillo (Delano), Larry Lattman (California Veterans Home in Yountville), and Judy Gaze (San Diego). Legal Counsel Joe Maguire and CVB Executive Officer Earl Steck were also present.

Anthony Sinopoli led the Pledge of Allegiance and Chairman Sinopoli introduced the Board.

Chairman Sinopoli had the audience introduce themselves

### SELECT COMMITTEES REPORTS:

**Contract Review - Jerry Basconcillo, Chair:** No contracts for review at this time.

**Annual Report – Jerry Basconcillo, Chair:** Mr. Basconcillo explained that the Annual Report was in progress and it should be completed by October.

**Veterans Services – Jerry Basconcillo, Chair:** Mr. Basconcillo had nothing to report.

**Legislation – Larry Lattman, Chair:** Mr. Lattman said there were two bills pending that he was prepared to report on after discussing with the Secretary. Senator Knight is sponsoring SB 369 & 561 both effecting the organization and capability of the Department of Veterans Affairs to assist veterans and veterans programs. He will make a motion to oppose these two bills at the afternoon meeting.

**Veterans Homes - Larry Lattman, Chair:** Mr. Lattman reported that on April 19<sup>th</sup>, The Yountville Home had celebrated Founders Day and 119 years serving veterans. It was attended by Secretary Johannessen and other distinguished guests. They also had a well-attended town meeting with the Secretary and Undersecretary Tom Kraus. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the Assembly Veterans Committee will visit the Yountville Home.

**Farm and Home - Judy Gaze, Chair:** Report would be made in the afternoon.

**Appeal Findings:** Appeals would be dealt with in the afternoon. An appeal from James DeHerrera was initially assigned to Judy Gaze, however she was excused from May's meeting and that Formal Appeal was assigned to Dr. Ed Feldman.

**Policy and Procedures – Edward Feldman, Chair:** Dr. Feldman said new guidelines were pending, and a separate counsel from the Attorney General's office has been put on hold for fiscal reasons. Judy Gaze asked if we were at the point where we could publish our Policy Book, and was answered affirmatively that subject will be on the May and July meetings agenda.

**Open Forum-** John Canfield, Senior Vice Commander of the Veterans Affiliated Homes, spoke first, inviting everyone to the Memorial Day Parade around the Capitol, which his group was sponsoring for the 7<sup>th</sup> consecutive year.

Next was Lou Collier, resident of the Yountville Home. Spoke of the chronology of events leading to his admission to the home and his problems trying to get his spouse admitted. He has an appeal pending, Dr Feldman ask him to discuss his concerns after the meeting.

Donna Steiger, resident of the Yountville Home was the next speaker. She is the first resident of the Home to be elected to the city of Napa as a Councilperson. Stated her pride in the servicewomen in Iraq, and mentioned the small size of the single rooms (10" x 16"), but glad to have one in the Home.

Ed Rasmussen, of the Disabled American Veterans, requested status on the new homes. Bruce Thiesen, Deputy Secretary of Operations, said the homes that are being sent for architectural design are the West L.A., Lancaster and Santa Coy. The Fresno and Shasta area homes will not be in the process until next year. He said that they are in the process of going before the Veterans' Committee to acquire the funding for the architects next week. Everything is on track. Dirt would be turned in the first 3 homes at the soonest sometime in 2004, then again a year later for the other two homes.

June Shiner, resident of the Yountville Home spoke about the problems with seniority lists. She said Mr. Lattman is on the side of the non-veteran spouses. Emily Willis, resident of the Yountville Home, said that the building designated for women only, Section H, has 58 private rooms, 13 of which are occupied by spouses, with another spouse set to move in shortly. She went on to say that Marcella McCormick promised the women vets that the Home would change the percentages, so that the building would be 20% non-veterans and 80 % veterans. The veterans were having to wait about 2 years for a private room, while the spouses were only having to wait a month or two because when their spouse was placed in higher care or died, they were put on the list above the veterans by their seniority date into the home, rather than the date they became single.

Ms. Willis remarked she was #17 on the list when she entered the Home a year ago, that there has been six people who moved over to Section H, and now she is #15 on the list, which she didn't think was fair. Judy Gaze asked if there were any couples in the Home in which the woman is the vet, and was answered that there is one such couple.

Chairman Sinopoli said the Veterans Board was enacting cost-saving measures, like changing the sessions to one-day meetings, and holding video teleconferences. The May meeting scheduled for Barstow has changed its location to Sacramento, due to a request for a FORMAL Hearing. No meeting would be held in June.

**Meeting was adjourned until 2 p.m.**

**CALIFORNIA VETERANS BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF GENERAL SESSION #656**  
**Friday, April 11, 2003 – 2:00 AM**  
Department of Veterans Affairs Headquarters  
Sacramento, California

**GENERAL SESSION:**

The California Veterans Board (CVB) monthly public meeting was called to order at 2:00 P.M. Board members present included Chairman George Sinopoli (Fresno), Vice Chairman Edward Feldman (Westlake Village), Members Jerry Basconcillo (Delano), Judy Gaze (San Diego), and Larry Lattman (California Veterans Home in Yountville).

Bruce Thiesen led the invocation. Anthony Sinopoli led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Sinopoli introduced the members of the Board; Joe Maguire, Legal Counsel to the Board; and CVB Executive Officer Earl Steck.

**MOTION** passed to accept the minutes of the March 2003 California Veterans Board Meeting.

Deputy Secretary of Operations Bruce Thiesen spoke for Secretary Johannessen, mentioning the changes coming at Barstow. The SNF will be closed, in accordance with all rules and regulations established by the Department of Health Services. Extensive preparation has been made to accommodate the needs of the veterans and their families during the transition.

**REPORT FROM BOARD MEMBERS ON ACTIVITIES FOR MARCH:**

**Member Larry Lattman** reported attending the Board meeting in Chula Vista in March, and he spoke to the Assembly Veterans' Committee on March 11, representing the Board about the situation at Barstow. He also testified at the House Rules Committee confirmation of Secretary Johannessen.

**Member Judy Gaze** attended the Board meeting in Chula Vista in March. She said she has been making the rounds of Congress and key people from the San Diego area to gather support for Federal legislation to allow CDVA to use municipal bonds to raise money for veterans who have served since 1977. She had lunch with Susan Davis, who said she would support the bill. She was meeting soon with Congressman Pilner, and had talked to Representatives Cunningham and Hunter. She also will attend retirement ceremony for San Diego County CVSO, Col Jim Stodola (USMC Ret) and requested a plaque from the California Veterans Board in recognition of his service. Chairman approved.

**Member Ed Feldman** attended the CVB meeting in Chula Vista. He has been trying to coordinate an activity that would provide volunteer positions to backfill the spaces at Camp Pendleton and the Ventura County Naval Base that have been vacated.

**Member Jerry Basconcillo** did not attend the March meeting in Chula Vista, having had health problems. He stated he was glad to be back.

**Chairman Sinopoli** reported he also attended the Board meeting in Chula Vista. He said attended the Barstow Assembly meeting, which was contrary and political. The chairman stated he has been traveling the Fresno area, trying to gather support for a Fresno Veterans Home.

## **REPORTS:**

(Status of CDVA Division / Select Cal Vet Board (CVB) Committees / Special)

### **VETERANS HOMES OF CALIFORNIA, CDVA DIVISION:**

Undersecretary Tom Krause introduced the new Veterans Homes leadership, Deborah Kania. She spoke of her experience with long-term care, and was welcomed by the Chairman. The Undersecretary said the Barstow Home's Skilled Nursing Facility would be closing (128 beds.) We will be re-opening a 58-bed intermediate care facility. The 128 veterans would be moved to other Vets' Homes. He said 8 vets had been moved last week, with a goal of five a week. Judy Gaze asked whether they anticipate filling the vacant beds at Barstow with DOM folk, and how long this process would throw off the waiting list at Chula Vista. Undersecretary Krause said that 122 beds would convert to DOM. They are trying to expedite the opening of the third unit, which would have 180 beds, and the current Barstow residents would account for a third of that number. At Chula Vista, the Home Administrator is short-staffed, and is not going to have his SNF Administer of Director of Nursing until May. Yountville will take from 8 to 20 vets from Barstow over time. Bruce Thiesen told us of reorganization in the department, George Andries being moved to the Office of Director of Construction, Renovation and Redevelopment. He said the state has asked the department earlier in the year to do a 20% reduction plan, and just recently asked for another 10% reduction. Mr. Lattman talked about the residents desire for a chapel at Barstow, where they have been using a utility room as a chapel. He asked the Board to have a freestanding chapel included in future homes plans. Bruce Thiesen replied that everything to do with the homes plans is federally mandated, so the chapel would have to be funded by the state or private donations. Mr. Lattman said he thought local churches and veterans groups could raise the money. Mr. Hanretty stated the steps need to finish the process, that first, money raised, be it state money or donated, must be appropriated by the legislature for expenditure. Next, the Public Works Board must give permission to build the building, because the state takes on the responsibility of maintaining that building.

**FARM AND HOME PURCHASES, CDVA DIVISION – Jerry Jones, Chief** - Mr. Jones mentioned a Veterans Affairs Committee meeting in the Assembly, where Assemblywoman Parr read a statement about what she had committed to do for the Veterans Homes, such as monitoring the movement of residents from Barstow SNF, directing her staff to prepare a report on the April 4<sup>th</sup> exit report, and she was meeting with Secretary Johannessen. He gave Assemblywoman Parr's statement to the Board. The Chief also spoke of some upcoming bills that would impact the Department. SB. 561 by Knight and S. B. 369 by Knight, which would take administration of the Veterans Homes and the Cal-Vet program and transfer administration to other state agencies. It is likely the Department would oppose these bills, said Mr. Jones. He also mentioned the federal bill pending, H.R. 1742, which would enable the Department to use proceeds from sales of General Obligation bonds to fund loans for veterans who have served after December 31, 1976. Without this source of funding, our ability to make loans to veterans will be severely affected. Mr. Jones went on to say that recently we had a hearing in the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee where we discussed the life and disability program with The Standard Insurance Company as the carrier. The new program keeps the premiums and life insurance the same as before, but it enhances the disability coverage somewhat. Mr. Jones stated that thus far in the month of April, the Home Loan program has funded 33 loans for a total of 6 million dollars, and our loan processing is under 30 days. We have also changed our method of determining delinquent accounts, going to a widely used calculation standard. Board Member Judy Gaze asked about loan applications by Internet, and Mr. Jones replied that they are doing some testing, but are not quite there yet.

**MOTION** (Ms. Gaze) passed unanimously to endorse HR. 1742 with a resolution from the California Veterans Board. (Signed copy of resolution attached).

**MOTION** (Larry Lattman) passed unanimously to oppose SB 369 & 561, by Senator Knight.

**VETERANS HOMES CALIFORNIA, CVB Committee, Larry Lattman** had nothing else to add that had not been said earlier that morning.

**FARM AND HOME PURCHASES, CVB Committee, Judy Gaze:** Ms. Gaze thanked Mr. Flores and Jerry Beaver of his staff for the time they have taken to discuss Cal-Vet interest rates and insurance issues. They have also worked as a team on reviewing the Board policies that affect the Cal-Vet program. She asked the Board members to read the information she has provided so that action may be taken at the next meeting.

**VETERANS SERVICES DIVISION – Glen Halsey, Chief** - Mr. Halsey reported on a new timesaving online application for military records (DD-214). The new Redding cemetery project should be done by December 2004. There is legislation pending in both the Senate and the Assembly to establish a site selection committee for future veterans cemeteries. The Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise program is going strong, and CDVA is at 24% participation with the DVBE, while mandated for only 3%. The homeless stand-downs will face reduced funding this year. The CVSOs have a proposed cut next year. Mr. Halsey stated that in Iraq there are currently 12,953 guard and reserve members, and 12,547 active duty members of the Armed Forces who are from California, and we need to be able to provide services for them.

**VETERANS SERVICES, CVB Committee, Veterans Services, Jerry Basconcillo:** had nothing.

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES, CVB Committee, Edward Feldman:** Dr. Feldman stated there was meeting this day on policy with Bruce Thiesen, Joe Maguire, George Sinopoli and himself in an effort to redefine who the Board was and what our intentions were relative to policy. More recommendations will be on the agenda for May and July meetings.

**CONTRACT MANAGEMENT, CDVA – John Hanretty, Chief, Finance Division** – Mr. Hanretty reported that this is the end of the fiscal year, the time when all the Department's contracts are renewed. We are exempt from bid when we deal with the VA, as in the Veterans Homes, because it's another governmental agency, and yet the governor has asked us to competitively bid on contracts. He said we're looking to research that on a case-by-case basis. Inability to collect everything owed us has resulted in a shortfall this year, but the baseline budget was set too high. One of the tasks of the Office of State Audits was given was to evaluate our methodology and we are hoping their report will validate our position. We have appeared before the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees on next year's budget, the biggest issue for us would be the fee increase to the Veterans Homes, restoring the fees to the 55% level of domiciliary members. The LAO recommended that we adopt fee increases for all members of the home, which would have taken roughly \$85 more out of the pockets of residents of the SNF and the immediate care facility. The governor has asked for a 10% budget reduction for state departments, which in our case would mean \$10 million. We are in process of developing that proposal, but it definitely would entail cutting programs and laying people off. Larry Lattman questioned the Veterans Homes shortfall figures, saying a survey he did in Yountville showed the average income in Yountville was only \$780, not the \$1100 cited by Mr. Hanretty. Mr. Hanretty stated he would sit down with Mr. Lattman and the budget officer and go over the numbers with him.

**RECOGNITION AND AWARDS, CVB Committee, George Sinopoli.** He reported reviewing over 30 recommendations for CVB Commendation for the Homeless Veterans Program, approving all. He also instructed the Executive Officer to get a plaque for Col Jim Stodola the retiring CVSO in San Diego and American Legion National Commander Ron Conley who will be visiting CA in May.

**APPEALS, CVB Committee, George Sinopoli:** Discussion and motions were made on the following:

Motion on appeal: Appeal request from L. Christian – Denied  
Motion on appeal: Appeal request from L. Collier – Denied  
Motion on appeal: Appeal request from R. Hauch – Denied  
Motion on appeal: Appeal request from G. Van Reusen – Denied  
Appeal request from J. DeHerrera for FORMAL HEARING assigned to Ed Feldman and Legal Counsel, target date is May 9, 2003 in Sacramento.

**LEGAL DIVISION, Joseph Maguire, Deputy Secretary/Chief Counsel** presented update.

**INSPECTOR GENERAL, Julie Hom Deputy IG,** presented a fact sheet on Public Complaint line operations and provided points of contact for support: IG Complaint Line (877) 533-8772 or 916-830-1901, IG Fax 916-928-4677; IG Web site: [www.igva.ca.gov](http://www.igva.ca.gov). She also reported that recommendations have been provided for the appointment of a new Inspector General to replace Jerry Hansen who departed in February.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

**David Grafft,** consultant to Senate Veterans Affairs Committee presented an update on veteran's bills pending in the Senate. He stated the budget issues were of grave concern as potentially effecting veterans programs and his boss was holding off on introduction on future bills that may impact on the budget situation at this time. He invited anyone interested to attend the Senate Veterans hearing on April 22.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

See remarks above.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

**As noted above and,**

John Hanretty reported that the budget impact was growing and details were still being worked out. The latest impact on the 10 Percent Department wide Personnel Services Reduction.

**There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.**

- These minutes are only a summary of the proceeding and are not reported here verbatim.
- These minutes are posted to the California Department of Veterans Affairs on-line website at [www.cdva.ca.gov/board](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/board).
- Yearly schedule posted on web site: [www.cdva.ca.gov/board](http://www.cdva.ca.gov/board)